

Iraq. Thanks to their bravery and skill, America is waging this fight with focus and determination.

Over the last 29 months, many terrorists have learned the meaning of justice. Nearly two-thirds of Al Qaida's known leaders have been captured or killed. The terrorists are on the run, with good reason to fear what the night might bring. Success in the war on terror also requires that we confront regimes that might arm terrorists with the ultimate weapons. America is determined to meet this danger and to deny terrorists and dangerous regimes the ability to threaten us with the world's most deadly weapons.

For 12 years, the former dictator of Iraq defied the international community. He refused to disarm or account for his illegal weapons and programs. My administration looked at the intelligence information, and we saw a threat. Members of Congress looked at the intelligence, and they saw a threat. The United Nations Security Council looked at the intelligence, and it saw a threat. All of us knew Saddam Hussein's history. He waged aggressive wars against neighboring countries and inspired to dominate the Middle East. He cultivated ties to terrorists. He built weapons of mass destruction. He hid those weapons. And he used chemical weapons against thousands of Iraqis and Iranians. Saddam Hussein doubted our resolve to enforce our word. Now he sits in a prison cell while his country moves toward a democratic future.

Today in Iraq, our coalition faces deadly attacks from a remnant of Saddam's supporters joined by foreign terrorists. Recently we intercepted a letter sent by a senior Al Qaida associate named Zarqawi to one of Usama bin Laden's top lieutenants. The letter describes a terrorist strategy, to tear Iraq apart with ethnic violence, to undermine Iraqi security forces, to demoralize our coalition, and to prevent the rise of a sovereign, democratic government. This terrorist outlines his efforts to recruit and train suicide bombers and boasts of 25 attacks on innocent Iraqis and coalition personnel. And he urges Al Qaida members to join him in waging war on our coalition and on the people of Iraq.

Zarqawi and men like him have made Iraq the central front in our war on terror. The

terrorists know that the emergence of a free Iraq will be a major blow against the worldwide terrorist movement. In this, they are correct.

But we have seen this enemy before, and we know how to deal with them. Fighting alongside the people of Afghanistan, we are defeating the terrorists in that country, and fighting alongside the people of Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there as well. Iraq, like Afghanistan, will be free.

Our coalition is working with Iraq's Governing Council to draft a basic law with a bill of rights. We're working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty. The establishment of a free Iraq will be a watershed event in the history of the Middle East, helping to advance the spread of liberty throughout that vital region. And as freedom takes hold in the greater Middle East, the people of the region will find new hope, and America will be more secure.

Two-and-a-half years ago, on a clear September morning, the enemies of America brought a new kind of war to our shores. Three days later, I stood in the rubble of the Twin Towers. My resolve today is the same as it was then: I will not relent until the terrorist threat to America is removed.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:35 a.m. on February 20 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Dinner for the Nation's Governors *February 22, 2004*

Good evening. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are honored to host so many of our friends and new acquaintances. The Nation's Governors were the guests at our first official state dinner almost 3 years

ago today. It's great to see so many of those same Governors with us tonight. It's kind of like being with members of your family. Right, Jeb? *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the fact that the Vice President is with us. I oftentimes say Dick Cheney is the finest Vice President our country has ever had. Mother always says, "Wait a minute." *[Laughter]* I want to thank the former Governors who are in my Cabinet, Tommy Thompson and John Ashcroft, Tom Ridge, who is not with us tonight, and the newest member of my Cabinet, Mike Leavitt.

I want to welcome the Nation's new Governors, Barbour and Fletcher, Kernan, Blanco, Walker, Tulafono, and Schwarzenegger. *[Laughter]* Last time I was with Governor Schwarzenegger, it dawned on me that we have some things in common. We both married well. *[Laughter]* We both have trouble with the English language. *[Laughter]* We both have big biceps. *[Laughter]* Well, two out of the three. *[Laughter]*

In the past 3 years, our country has faced some great challenges. We're still at war. The war on terror is a new kind of war in which every American is threatened and every level of government must work together. We've taken vital steps to secure our homeland, and I want to thank the Governors for their hard work. I'm going to continue to work with you to fulfill our solemn duty to protect the American people.

We share responsibility as well to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit so that our economy continues to grow and people can find work; work together to make sure Americans can gain affordable access to health care; to make sure every child learns to read and write and add and subtract. We've made good progress. We'll continue to meet our obligations in future years.

I've got great confidence in America because I believe in the strength of the American people. I've got great confidence in our Nation's Governors because you represent your State's highest ideals and you hold your people's trust.

It's a pleasure to host you all here. And now I'd like you all to join me in a toast to the Governors of the United States.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:12 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; Gov. Ernie Fletcher of Kentucky; Gov. Joseph E. Kernan of Indiana; Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco of Louisiana; Gov. Olene S. Walker of Utah; Gov. Togiola Tulafono of American Samoa; and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Remarks to the National Governors Association Conference

February 23, 2004

Well, that's it? Okay. *[Laughter]* Always love to get a short introduction. Hope you all cleaned the room up after last night. *[Laughter]* Laura and I really enjoyed that. Thanks for coming. It was a lot of fun. Everybody seemed pretty well behaved. I don't know about Coach, but yes, I know, it's hard to take him out.

I'm glad members of my Cabinet are here. Obviously, the more communications we can have about issues that worry you, the easier it is for us to solve problems. Governors are problem-solvers, and so is the President. Our jobs are to identify problems and deal with them, and the best way to do so is in the spirit of cooperation.

That's sometimes hard in Washington, I readily concede. This is not a town that thrives upon cooperation, like most State capitals. But we'll continue to work hard to help you, because by helping our Governors, we really help our people. That's the job of a President.

Yesterday in my toast, I said the war on terror goes on, and it does. I wish I could report otherwise, but that's not a true assessment of the world. We are chasing Al Qaida. We're dealing with rogue nations and proliferation, but the war still goes on. And as a fellow Commander in Chief, it's important for you to know that. And therefore, it's essential that we continue to cooperate on matters of homeland security.

We'll have a robust budget in front of the Congress, and we expect it to be passed. Tom, evidently, has met with you all to talk about ways to make sure that the flow of money is expedited from the Federal Government to the State Governments to the